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THE ALARM

A Vaudeville Sketch in One Act

By
MARION ROGER FAWCETT
Author of "Mor'd Alice," etc.

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BOSTON

WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1912

THE ALARM

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CHARACTERS

EDWARD RAMSDEN, *a shopkeeper.*
(doubled with)

ROBERT, *his son.*

A POLICE SERGEANT.
(doubled with)

A BURGLAR.

SCENE.—Ramsden's shop. TIME.—Eleven P. M.
Plays fifteen minutes.



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The Alarm

SCENE.—*The interior of a small grocer's shop; back-cloth showing inside of window. Limes at back to give effect of light from street lamp. Cases, barrels, etc., arranged about floor and counter. Advertisement signs on walls. Counter across stage. Small safe down stage L. Doors R. and L. On door R. an iron burglar alarm is attached. A powerful gong or bell is worked off in connection with this, giving sound of loud alarm.*

(As curtain rises, EDWARD RAMSDEN is discovered kneeling before door R., hammering at same. He is a man about sixty-five, white-haired and cheerful looking; he wears a grocer's apron over his clothes, and whistles in quavering voice as he works.)

VOICE (*off*). Edward! Edward!

RAMS. (*rising stiffly*). Coming, my dear—coming. I've nearly got it fixed. If any burglar tries to get in here to-night, he—will —— (*Loud knock at door R.*) Come in!

(He draws back behind door chuckling to himself. Door R. opens quickly from outside. The alarm rings violently. POLICE SERGEANT, with lantern in hand, stands in doorway. Alarm continues to whirr until RAMS. stops it.)

SER. Good Lord! Mr. Ramsden—what's wrong?

RAMS. Got a shock, Sergeant, eh? That's my new burglar alarm. My son sent it down to me yesterday, so I've just fixed it in place. Kicks up the devil's own row, don't it?

SER. I thought the day of judgment had arrived!

RAMS. Yes! I don't think a burglar can make a haul here now. I asked the lad to send me something noisy, and he's done it. Made it himself, too!

SER. Funny you should be fixing that. I just knocked to give you warning to make things safe. There's been so many robberies lately I should lock up everything if I were you, sir.

RAMS. Not much need to with this, Sergeant. The lad's made it strong; he's got a genius for machinery, that boy.

SER. You've a right to be proud of him, sir—he's got clever fingers.

RAMS. Aye! and brain, too, Sergeant—brain, too; takes after his father there.

VOICE (*off*). Edward! Edward!

RAMS. It's startled the old lady. When a woman's bed-ridden she's sort of fearsome at nights. (*Goes to door L., calling off.*) It's all right, mother! We was only trying the alarm. Go to sleep, lass. I'm going to have a smoke. Sit ye down, man—sit ye down!

SER. Thank you, Mr. Ramsden, but I must be off on my rounds. Knox is down with bronchitis, so I must keep a lookout myself. There's been so many robberies lately.

RAMS. Aye, you're right there! I'm main thankful my boy has sent me the alarm. I've got eighty pounds in the safe there.

SER. (*starting to his feet*). Hush! What's that?

RAMS. What's wrong?

SER. I thought I heard — Will that confounded thing ring if I open the door?

RAMS. Not if you press the spring so. (*Presses alarm.*) Now then, open!

(*They fling door open. SER. flashes lantern.*)

SER. There's no one about, but I could have sworn I heard something. Better lock your doors to-night, sir. Alarms don't always work.

RAMS. Ah! There's no fear of this one, Sergeant. My boy says that no living soul can get past this one unless they know the trick.

SER. The trick?

RAMS. Yes! If any one knew how to hold this spring so (*holding spring*), it would make no noise; but then no one knows the trick 'cept my boy an' me. Not another soul 'cept me an' my boy.

SER. I'm glad you're so safe, Mr. Ramsden. You're lucky to have a clever son. Good-night to you, sir. [*Exit.*

RAMS. Good-night, Sergeant. (*Looks proudly at alarm.*) I'd like to set it off again, damned if I wouldn't, only it might scare the missus.

VOICE (*off*). Edward! Edward!

RAMS. Comin', lass—comin'. (*Locks door and turns out light.*) Lord! it's tired I am! Bed 'ill be main welcome to-night, I'm thinkin'—main welcome. [*Exit door L.*]

(*There is a second's pause. Lights all out on stage. Then metallic sound of drill at door R. is heard. There is a slight grinding noise, then a man's hand appears around side of door, pressing alarm. Light from lantern is flashed round room. ROBERT enters. He carries hand electric lamp which he flashes occasionally and then darkens.*)

CONFEDERATE (*off; in whisper*). All right?

ROB. Yes! Keep a lookout.

CON. (*off*). All serene! He's out of sight!

ROB. Sssh!—(*He goes to safe, picks lock and opens; takes out notes, counting.*) Twenty—thirty-five—sixty—
Wonder if there's anything in the till—seventy—

CON. (*off*). Douse the shiner, Bob!

ROB. Lie low! (*He puts out light.*)

CON. It's all right now. Better hurry. Got the swag?

ROB. Yes! More than I expected. You clear to the station first—*see*. There's a train eleven fifty. Wait for me there.

CON. Right oh! I've got the tools.

ROB. Then clear—I'm coming!

CON. I'll wait till — Look out, Bob! Keep back!

ROB. Take care! Don't move—the alarm.

CON. Get back, Bob. Police —

ROB. Mind! Keep still, you fool. My God! (*CON. pushes against door. Alarm rings violently.*) Damnation! Run like blazes! Make for the station.

RAMS. (*calling off*). Who's there? Help! Police!

(*There is a quick scuffle at door R. SER. holds up lantern, which is knocked from his hand.*)

SER. Strike a light, Mr. Ramsden—quick! They've smashed my lantern. (*He blows whistle.*)

RAMS. Where are you? (*Strikes light.*) Have they escaped?

SER. I'm afraid so, sir. Your alarm just saved you.

RAMS. Saved me! Good God, man, the money's gone!

SER. Gone!

RAMS. The safe's cleaned out.

SER. We'll get them, sir; they can't have gone far.

(*Whistles.*)

RAMS. They'll make for the station—there's a train at —

SER. All right, sir, leave it to us!

[*Exit, R.; whistle off.*]

VOICE (*calling off*). Edward! Edward!

RAMS. I'm comin', lass — Eighty pounds! It's a lot to lose. Aye, a big loss, and to-night of all nights with the alarm set and all—what's that? They've dropped summat. (*Picks up pocketbook.*) A pocketbook. The scoundrels! Mayhap this 'ill serve as a cue. Why! it's Bob's!—the pocketbook his mother gave him at Christmas. How did it come here? He couldn't 'a' left it in the safe an' me not seen it. His letters in it, too. (*Reads letter.*) "Dear Bob:—I'll meet you to-night as arranged. You had better deal with the alarm, as no one knows the trick except yourself——" (*Repeats words.*) No one knows the trick except yourself—— My God!—It's not true!—I'm going mad—— No one knows the trick except —— It's not true, I say—it's not true! Robert, my son—my own lad ——

SER. (*at door R.*). We've searched everywhere, sir. Not a sign of them. I'll go to the station myself now and ——

RAMS. Sergeant, I've been thinkin'. You haven't searched here.

SER. The shop? Nonsense, sir. They wouldn't ——

RAMS. You haven't looked, man—search and see.

SER. I'll put Harris on, if you like, sir, but the station's important.

RAMS. (*wildly*). No, search yourself, Sergeant. Don't leave me here alone—don't.

SER. God bless me, sir. You're not afraid?

RAMS. I'm an old man, Sergeant. I'm a—a coward, too. Search the house, Sergeant—search the house.

SER. But the station, sir. We are losing time.

RAMS. No! We have time for all. Search here first, I tell you!

SER. It's impossible, sir. But I'll look if you like.

[*Exit, door L.*

RAMS. Search well, Sergeant—search well. (*Repeats in dull voice.*) No one knows the trick except ——

SER. (*entering L.*) There's no one there, sir—— Damnation! Listen! The train. We're too late! (*Train whistle heard off.*) They've got away!

RAMS. Yes! They've got away!

SER. If you hadn't kept me, sir, we might have caught them. I'll wire to have the train watched.

RAMS. No! No! I mean it's no use now, Sergeant; the money's gone!

SER. I'll wire anyway, sir—though I'm afraid it's hopeless. They must have known the trick of your alarm, sir.

RAMS. Yes! They knew the trick of the alarm!

SER. I'll let you know, sir, if I've any news. Good-night to you, sir.

[*Exit, R.*

RAMS. He's got away! I gave him time to catch the train. Perhaps I'm wrong—but the book—the letter—then the alarm. (*Picks up book.*) I mustn't let his mother see that—his mother—— She was always that proud of his clever fingers. Oh! God forgive you—my boy—my boy ——

(*He leans on counter burying his head in his arms. Clock strikes twelve off.*)

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MRS. LEWIS, <i>the minister's wife.</i>	MRS. OTIS, <i>on the dinner committee.</i>
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LIZA LIZ HANKINS, *brat.*

JUDGE JOTHAM MARLEY, *Christian.*

MELISSY WATKINS, *elderly maiden.*

JONAS JARROCK, *farmer.*

BELINDY JARROCK, *seamstress.*

HIRAM CURTIS PECK, *seller.*

APRIL BLOSSOM, *help.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Sitting-room behind Ezra Bromley's store. Morning.

ACT II.—The same. Some days later.

ACT III.—At the Jarrocks'. Some weeks later.

ACT IV.—At the Bromleys'. Later in the evening.

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